

of pulses, 11,189 tonnes have been shipped by February 20, 2007.

- (ix) In order to contain volatility in the futures prices of wheat, sugar and pulses, Forward Markets Commission (FMC) has imposed limits on open position, reduced limits on daily fluctuations and imposed additional/special margins.
- (x) Reduction in import duty on palm group of oils by 10 percentage points in August 2006 and by a further 10-12.5 percentage points in January 2007. Maintaining tariff value for assessing import duty unchanged at July 2006 level.
- (xi) Ban on export of skimmed milk powder.
- (xii) Steps were taken by Reserve Bank of India to reduce liquidity in the system by increasing the cash reserve ratio and repo rates.
- (xiii) Keeping in view the prevailing price situation, the Central Government had issued a Central Order dated 29.08.2006 under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to enable the State Governments to invoke Stock Limits in respect of wheat and pulses for a period of 6 months. By virtue of this Order, the State Governments/UT Administrations have been empowered to take effective action to bring out the hoarded stock of these items to ensure their availability to the common people at reasonable prices. Government has also decided to extend the validity of the Central order by another six months.

Privatisation of catering services

†*64. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the catering services in Railways have been entrusted to private sector;

(b) whether this system of privatisation would be able to provide qualitative catering to common man at a reasonable price;

(c) whether small trolley men, vendors and shopkeepers would be deprived of their business in the name of cleanliness and sanitation; and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

[2 March, 2007]

RAJYA SABHA

(d) whether the passengers of the trains halting for a short period at a station would not have to face inconvenience with this system?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) to (d) Privatisation of catering services on Railways were announced in the Railway Budget 1991-92. As per Catering Policy issued on 06.01.1992, Railways decided that in future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and all the new units both static and mobile should be managed by licensees only. In the Catering Policy 2000 and new Catering Policy 2004, it was reiterated that — "In future no catering/vending units should be taken up for departmental management and licensees should manage the services....". In subsequent catering policies also privatisation of catering services over Indian Railways has been pursued.

In order to upgrade, professionalise and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains and on other locations, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has been formed and entrusted with the task of providing catering services on Indian Railways at a reasonable price, and to consolidate railway catering services through public-private partnership and also to develop and upgrade the human resource skills by imparting training at all levels and introduce new technology and modern management practices. Price of standard meals, tea/coffee, breakfast and packaged drinking water is fixed by the Railway. Regular inspections on quality of food are undertaken by Railway and IRCTC officials.

More than 90% of the catering units over Indian Railways are small units comprising of trolleys, stalls etc. and small licensees' business have not been affected due to graduation of catering services.

Passengers of trains having halts for short durations can conveniently avail of the facilities of small units along the platforms, both stalls and trolleys.

Suicides by farmers

***65. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI:** Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether cause of farmers' suicides has been analysed by the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister;